



United States Senator  
**Richard Shelby**  
REPORTS TO ALABAMA



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## CONCERN ABOUT HUMAN CLONING

The U. S. Senate is considering what may well be one of the defining issues of this century: the issue of human cloning. It's hard to believe that just a few short years ago human cloning was merely the subject of movies and horror films—not real life. "Multiplicity," a movie starring Michael Keaton, depicted an average American who was having trouble making time for his family—a fact with which most everyone can relate. He had himself cloned to make more time for his family and the things he enjoyed. While the clones in "Multiplicity" made for hilarious capers, even the movie presented some interesting and compelling dilemmas.

Now, human cloning is not just a fictitious story line, but a very real issue that must be addressed. More than 90 percent of Americans polled on this issue have said they are concerned about human cloning and believe it should be prohibited. I, too, am very concerned about the ethical dilemmas presented by the possibility of human cloning. The ramifications of such experimentation are too numerous and complex to mention. What is most important to remember, however, is that just because we have the scientific means to perform human cloning experiments, or any other technology that has the potential to alter society, does not mean we should ignore the ethical and moral implications that arise by doing so. It also does not mean we should stop beneficial and potentially life-saving research either.

Recently, I co-sponsored legislation introduced by Sen.

Christopher "Kit" Bond (R-Missouri) to prohibit human cloning, while protecting essential scientific research. The bill, the "Human Cloning Prohibition Act," would prohibit any person or entity, public or private, from using somatic cell nuclear transfer for human cloning purposes.

Somatic Cell Nuclear Transfer is a new and unproven technology that has no therapeutic or economic-based need at this time. Additionally, according to Congressional testimony by members of the pharmaceutical industry, claims that somatic cell nuclear transfer offers "viable alternatives to infertile parents is cruel and completely unjustified." In fact, the primary research agenda behind the technology is that it could create warehouses of human embryos solely for research purposes. In effect, Xeroxing humans.

In addition to stopping somatic cell nuclear transfer, the "Human Cloning Prohibition Act" legislation prohibits the importation of cloned human embryos created by somatic cell nuclear transfer, including those intended for the creation of a human cloned individual. While there are several pieces of legislation that aim to prohibit human cloning, Sen. Bond's bill is the only bill that would make it illegal to experiment with cloned human embryos, and it establishes civil and criminal penalties for those who do not comply.

While critics of the Bond "Human Cloning Prohibition Act" would have you believe that it will stop important life-saving research, it does not. In fact, it would not prohibit any

research, including embryo research, as long as that research does not involve the use of somatic cell nuclear transfer.

Another important provision in the Bond "Human Cloning Prohibition Act" would establish a commission, the National Bioethics Commission, to promote a national dialogue on bioethics. The Commission, a suggestion offered by Tennessee Senator Bill Frist, who is a heart and lung transplant surgeon, would provide an independent forum for broad public participation and discourse concerning important bioethical issues including, but not limited to, cloning. The Commission would be non-partisan, and would report to Congress on an annual basis. On an issue as new and scientifically astounding as cloning, the Commission would open and facilitate national debate on this and other related issues. Made up of theologians, philosophers, bioethicists, scientists and lay persons, the Commission would be tasked with reviewing both the state of the science and the prospects of certain technologies being used to clone humans, and recommending a course of action.

I believe we have a great deal to learn about cloning and other scientific advancements taking place. However, in our rush to create and develop new technology, we must not abandon our obligations to protect and preserve the sanctity of our society. In the words of Dr. Marcia Angell, editor of the *New England Journal of Medicine*, "Knowledge, although important, may be less important to a decent society than the way it is obtained."

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